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have been so given under neuters according to form § 89, b. Rule 4 (p. 86) that nouns in *sel* are com. gen. with the exception of names of utensils which are neuter is incomplete. The rule is that concrete nouns in *sel* or nouns that can be or are apt to be thought of as concrete are neuter, and are mainly formed from verbal stems. The list includes: *et Aadsel, et Bidsel, et Bindsel, et Brændsel, et Dæksel, et Hængsel* (and dial. *et Op-hængsel*), *et Barsel, et Fængsel, et Stængsel, et Skræmsel, et Sysse, et Æsel*. Cf., however, the concrete nouns not formed from verbs, *en Tidsel, en Bossel, en Kapsel, en Pensel*. Abstract nouns in *-sel* are, however, com. gen.; so *Glemsel, Hørsel, Blygsel, Trængsel, Færdsel, Rædsel, Skjøtsel*, etc., etc. Cf. also *en Advarsel*, a warning, an admonition, and *et Varsel*, a warning = a notice, an omen (and an evil omen). *Sand*, p. 87, 1, is in Norwegian also com. gen. Under exceptions to Rule 1 of nouns that are neuter by meaning should have been added, *Maden, Stenen, Graniten, Luften* and *Silken*. P. 88, 2, the statement: "*et led* (in d. volkl. Sprache auch *en led*) ein Gelenk, ein Glied" is misleading. The word is regularly *en Led* in popular speech when it means 'a joint,' and always *et Led* in the meaning 'a wicket, a gate.' The noun *Rus* is used both in the neuter and the com. gen. in Norwegian, though preferably the former. Compound nouns (§ 91) in Norwegian take the gender of the last element of the compound, e. g. *et Armbånd, en Spiseske*, etc. Under the exceptions I would have stated that if the last element of the compound is an abstract of the com. gen. but the compound itself is concrete, or may be thought of as such, it becomes neuter, e. g., *et Måltid* but *Tid-en*; *et Folkefærd, et Gjenfærd*, but *Færden*; *et Vidnesbyrd*, etc. *Ben* is neut. by the rule that mass names and names of material are of that gender, but the compound *Gråben*, 'wolf' (lit. 'grayleg') becomes com. gen. by the rule that names of animals are so. Evidently a misprint is *Mårenbla'*, p. 27, for *Mårnbla'*, the colloquial pronunciation of *Morgenbladet*, and on p. 85 *et Flod* for *en Flod*.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE UNDERSTANDING AND THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF DANTE'S ANIMAL LORE.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—I should like to point out very briefly a few of the mistakes made by Dr. Kenneth McKenzie who has recently reviewed in *Modern Language Notes* my book on Dante and the Animal Kingdom. Though the task of judging this work was, as Dr. McKenzie says, unsought, one cannot help feeling from his tone that it was not unwelcome. There is a tone of suppressed emotion, and ever and anon one is scorched, as it were, by flames of indignation. In a final glow after his thoughts are all in type, Dr. McKenzie adds a footnote in which he triumphantly declares that his views are substantially the same as those of the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* and of *The Athenaeum*, but he owns that "somewhat more favorable reviews" have appeared in *The Nation* and elsewhere. "Somewhat" seems a reluctant word; it might not have been used at all if Dr. McKenzie had been supplied by an obliging publisher and a "clipping bureau." *The Athenaeum* does agree substantially with Dr. McKenzie. Both are unwilling and both are rather fierce; but, of the two, Dr. McKenzie is perhaps the fiercer. But it interests me to learn that Dr. McKenzie finds himself even substantially in agreement with the review in the *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, for here are the words with which each begins: "Era questo argomento da libro? sinceramente non ci pare." "A study of Dante's references to the animal world is important, not merely for the understanding of Dante, but for the light it throws on the scientific ideas of the Middle Ages." A critic who calls this substantial agreement needs analysis; but I pass on to an accusation of flippancy as to the Bible. My flippancy, thinks Dr. McKenzie, is very noticeable. To prove this he quotes two phrases: "lions stricken with lock-jaw for the benefit of Daniel" is one of them; the other is "the nightmare of the Apocalypse." He declares, also, that I am not familiar enough with the Bible "to avoid the blunder of saying 'straight and narrow path.'" Are we, then, for-

bidden to use a phrase simply because it resembles something biblical? My words are not quoted, as Dr. McKenzie would have his readers believe, but they came to me quite naturally. They were these (p. 85): It is evident, then, that the monkey never led our poet from the straight and narrow path of orthodoxy.

If we consider what havoc the monkey has caused in the thinking world since Dante's time: how he led a Matthew Arnold to speak of "our arboreal ancestors," and how even many clergymen are gradually becoming suspicious of their origin; in a word, how almost every zoologist since Darwin believes that men were not always what they are now, I think my phrase is a fair one. What amuses me, though, is Dr. McKenzie's statement that the story of Elisha is "not zoology but literature." As zoology is the truth about animals, "literature," to Dr. McKenzie, obviously means fiction. But Dante did believe the story of the "two she-bears" that "tare forty and two children of them" to be literally true, and therefore to be "zoology," as we say now.

Again, Dr. McKenzie declares that I "cannot make Dante responsible for the use of bestial to characterize a wrong or unnatural (abnormal?) condition in man;" but I can and I do, very distinctly, on page 81. Dr. McKenzie then goes on in this strain: "We can imagine saying to him, innocently: 'That man looks like a ghost,' and being met with: 'You poor deluded fool, do you believe in ghosts?'" This supposition is infelicitous. I should probably say "Yes, he is pretty thin."

Next we read: "This is the treatment to which he [Dr. H.] constantly subjects Dante, who was after all not writing a text-book of natural science, but was treating his conception of the universe under the form of a poetical allegory." Obviously Dr. McKenzie is referring to the *Commedia*; my book deals with all Dante's works, and Dr. McKenzie seems unable to rid his mind of the common notion that the *Commedia* constitutes Dante's works. As a matter of fact, in the Oxford Dante the *Commedia* occupies 153 pages; the *Convito* 101 pages; the *De Monarchia* 36 pages; the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* 22 pages; the *Epistolae* 18 pages; and the *Quaestio de Aqua et Terra* (which is probably authentic) 9 pages. In other

words, Dante's treatment "of his conception of the universe under the form of a poetical allegory" is in bulk as 153 to 186; but it must be remembered that the *Convito* and the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* are far from being as long as they would have been had Dante lived to complete them.

Not only did Dante include in his *Commedia* many kinds of "scientific" considerations, such as theories of cosmology, creation, generation (a description, even, of the growth of a foetus and its getting the breath of life), language, anthropology, demonology, etc., but that he meant to tell the truth about them all, though often poetically. Furthermore, the *Convito*, poetic in parts, was meant as a scientific treatise on more themes than I have room to enumerate. Again, the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is also a scientific treatise. *De Monarchia* is what we might call a scientific treatise, also; for Dante intended to demonstrate scholastically his theories as to government. All this has escaped the mind of Dr. McKenzie, who thus falls into an error as to Dante, and who also shows what may be the effects of prejudice on criticism.

Vedi la bestia, per cui io mi volsi:  
Aiutami da lei, famoso saggio. . . .

RICHARD HOLBROOK.

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#### *To the Editors Mod. Lang. Notes.*

SIRS:—I have just discovered a serious mistake in my edition of Chateaubriand's *Le Dernier Abencerage*, published by the American Book Co. Either the copyist or the printer has omitted the following block of words from the vocabulary (p. 69):

*dessein*, m., design, purpose.  
*dessiner*, to draw, trace, cast.  
*destin*, m., destiny, fate.  
*destinée*, f., destiny, fate.  
*destiner*, to destine, intend.  
*détacher*, to detach, loosen, untie.  
*détail*, m., detail, particular.  
*détourner*, to turn aside, avert, keep off.  
*détruire*, to destroy.  
*deux*, two; *tous*—, both.